

## **INTERAGENCY COORDINATION**

Interagency cooperation is vital to the full realization of NPS fire management program objectives. The ability of a single agency to implement a fire management program of any complexity is limited without coordination with and assistance from other organizations. Interagency cooperation and the coordination of shared resources and common activities are imperative at all organizational levels. A clear understanding of the roles each agency has at each organizational level is necessary to maximize the benefits of interagency coordination and assure the fulfillment of agency responsibilities.

### **COORDINATION**

#### **National Level Coordination:**

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group ( <http://www.nwcg.gov> )

1. (NWCG) was formed on March 18, 1976, by cooperative agreement between the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior. The purpose of NWCG is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of all Federal and state wildland and prescribed fire management control agencies in the United States. The group accomplishes this goal by coordinating the programs of the participating agencies in order to provide a means for working together constructively. NWCG reached consensus on substantive issues in fire management. Agreed upon policies, standards, and procedures are then implemented directly by each agency.
2. The Interior Fire Coordination Committee (IFCC) guides and coordinates development of wildland fire policy among the four-wildland management agencies in the Department of Interior. IFCC provides leadership and advice for the development, coordination and maintenance of wildland fire management capabilities, and for the standardization of procedures, methods and practices within the Department. NPS units must comply with these DOI standards.
3. The National Interagency Fire Center (<http://www.nwcg.gov>)(NIFC) establishes and provides nationally coordinated training and equipment as directed by the national coordinating groups. The National Fire Management Officer at NIFC is responsible for National Park Service participation in Center activities.

Regional Level Coordination. Regional offices oversee and facilitate the implementation of interagency standards and policies developed at the national level. RFMO's facilitate and coordinate participation in national training, overhead teams, and task groups. Through coordination with counterparts from other agencies, RFMO's assure that the Service contributes appropriately to regional interagency training and overhead needs.

Park Level Coordination. The park fire management plan and any supporting documents identify the necessary local sources, types, and levels of interagency coordination. They also delineate the process whereby compliance with national and regional policies and standards will be achieved. Park superintendents and their staffs maintain and execute the fire management plan and cooperative interagency relationships.

## **INTERAGENCY MOBILIZATION**

National Mobilization. Mobilization tests interagency cooperation and demonstrates the value of interagency coordination. The National Interagency Mobilization Guide, which is revised annually, clearly describes interagency mobilization and dispatch procedures at all levels. All parks and regions without deviation will follow its directives.

Regional Coordination. Regional dispatch normally occurs through geographic area coordination center to meet wildland fire mobilization requirements. These centers review simultaneously occurring incidents and dispatch interagency resources on a priority basis. This resource allocation process is often done through a Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (MAC Group). A park may be called upon to provide resources or to receive requested resources based upon the priorities established by the MAC Group. Geographic area coordination centers may be further subdivided into zone or state coordination centers.

Local Coordination. Parks should become familiar with the dispatch center through which their personnel are dispatched and resources are requested.

## **AGREEMENTS**

Parks should develop agreements with local agencies and fire departments to meet mutual needs. Concerns of area-wide scope should be addressed through regional agreements. Exhibit 1 is a guide for selecting the proper agreement or other instrument. Drafts of all agreements and contracts for fire protection shall be submitted to regions and, where appropriate, field solicitors for review prior to implementation. The authority to enter into interagency agreements is extensive and found in Chapter 2, Federal Assistance and Interagency Agreements guideline (DO-20), and the Departmental Manual 620 (<http://fire.r9.fws.gov/fm/policy/g20dm1.htm>) (DM-620).

Multi-agency fire activities may be in one of the three following categories:

Mutual Aid Agreements. The national agreement, which serves as an umbrella for interagency assistance among federal agencies, is the "Interagency Agreement Between the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the United States Department of the Interior and the Forest Service of the United States Department of Agriculture" (1997). This agreement and other national agreements

provide a framework for and grant substantial latitude in the development of regional and local agreements.

Agreements for mutual-aid assistance are essential and will be a part of the fire management program in each park.

Refer to DO-20 for detailed instructions and format for developing agreements.

Agreements should lead to positive interaction among the participating parties by providing for areas of interaction other than crisis operations and by addressing all potential areas of cooperation and coordination in fire management programs. In addition to the requirements of DO-20, they should specifically address the following, as appropriate:

1. Cooperation in prevention, preparedness, suppression and prescribed fire management operations.
2. Coordination in development and implementation of fire management plans, including fire management strategies, tactics, and methods.
3. Identification of parties responsible for implementing various aspects of the agreement.
4. Resolution of differences in qualification standards for suppression and prescribed fire personnel.
5. Joint training and exercises.
6. Procedures for initial attack, notification, and transition into extended attack.
7. Incident management responsibilities, including unified command within the ICS framework and resolution of command responsibility in particular situations.
8. Special considerations for fire management along administrative boundaries.

Any agreement, which obligates federal funds or commits anything of value, must be signed by the appropriate warranted contracting officer. Specifications for funding responsibilities should include billing procedures and schedules for payment. Any agreement that extends beyond fiscal year must be made subject to the availability of funds. Any transfer of federal property must be in accordance with federal property management regulations. All agreements must undergo periodic joint review and, as appropriate, revision. The best general reference on agreements (except for terminology) is "Partnership for Efficiency through Cooperative Agreements" by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group.

Contracted Protection. Contracts may be used where they are the most cost-effective means for providing fire protection commensurate with established standards. A contract, however, does not absolve a superintendent of the responsibility for managing a park fire program. The park's approved fire management plan must define the role of the contractor in the overall program.

Contracts should be developed and administered in accordance with Federal Acquisition Regulations. In particular, a contract should specify conditions for abandonment of a park fire in order to respond to a new call elsewhere.

Emergency Assistance. Emergency assistance may be provided by the Service to adjacent jurisdictions upon their request in the absence of any formalized agreements. Some state and local departments, however, will not provide assistance to neighboring jurisdictions without a completed agreement. Even parks with very infrequent fire occurrence must develop agreements with their neighboring agencies so emergency assistance can be provided and reimbursed.

The authority for rendering emergency fire or rescue assistance outside the National Park System is contained in the Act of August 8, 1953 (16 USC 16(1), and DM-620.

(<http://fire.r9.fws.gov/fm/policy/g20dm1.htm>)